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ABSTRACT

The main theme of Richard W. Riley's speech is the importance of quality education to America's Latino community. The speech outlines a series of challenges for the 21st century: the promise of language and the need for Latinos to learn English with the aid of bilingual education; the need to meet increasing demand for quality teachers, especially for limited English proficiency (LEP) students; the need to raise Latino student achievement and lower their dropout rate; the importance of building links between the schools and the wider community; and the need to build more schools and to modernize and expand existing schools to accommodate expanding and changing student populations. Riley cites a report recently released by the Department of Education that details a number of effective policies and strategies the Department has identified that can and should be implemented to address the main challenges for the new century. The full speech touches upon the range of contemporary issues facing K-12 public education in the United States. (KFT)

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Speeches and Testimony

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Report: Transforming Education for Hispanic Youth: Exemplary Practices, Programs, and Schools

Remarks as prepared for delivery by U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley

Excelencia Para Todos- Excellence for All The Progress of Hispanic Education and the Challenges of a New Century

Bell Multicultural High School Washington, D.C.

March 15, 2000

Good morning. Thank you, Mariella Arias. Secretary Caldera, I want to thank you for those kind words and for putting forward such an innovative programs as GED Plus and College First. Anything we can do to bring motivated young men and women back into the world of learning is positive.

I especially want to thank Principal Maria Tukeva for hosting us here at Bell Multicultural High School—a dynamic center of learning and creativity in the heart of the nation's capital. In living up to its motto—"Excellence Through Diversity"—this school serves as a model for communities across the nation.

In my remarks today, I want to focus on the importance of education for this country's Latino community as we begin this new century—this education era. And I want to explore with you why I believe the state of Latino education for this century can be so promising.

You know, when we talk about Hispanic-Americans we are speaking about individuals from more than

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20 different nations, with countless dialects, different skin colors, and varying tastes in food and music. Some are descended from immigrants who have been in this nation hundreds of years, even before it became a nation; others are new arrivals, having been here only a week or a year, seeking to achieve the American Dream.

Regardless of these differences, there is one unifying factor in their lives, education, the primary and shared source of hope, opportunity and success. It is our duty as a nation to ensure that the Hispanic community has every opportunity to achieve a quality education and the success that can accompany it—just as we have done for generations of Americans before them.

I am confident that we can address this challenge with innovation, that we can shed misperceptions and stereotypes, eliminate low expectations, and embrace the unique strengths that Latinos bring to education and our national community.

Last week, Juliet Garcia, the president of the University of Texas at Brownsville, and a member of the President's Advisory Commission, related to me a story that I think captures the essence of what we mean when we say "have high expectations and shatter false perceptions."

She told me about Morningside Elementary School, a small school in a low-income section of Brownsville, one of the poorest regions in the nation. Some years ago, a teacher began teaching chess to kindergartners through fifth-graders in that community. The students got up early to practice and gave up their weekends to play in chess tournaments. It paid off. Last year, this small school made it all the way to the national championships, and took second place.

Who would have thought—in a state where high school football is sometimes king and English is for many a second language—that these students would go head to head with the best minds in the country in one of the most challenging and intellectual games? They did and so did their teachers, parents, and principals—and that made all the difference.

The triumph of the Morningside chess team is the most recent chapter in the rich legacy of a people connected to history in a very positive way.

It is a legacy of accomplishment and courage. And it is a legacy of battles fought to overcome discrimination and oppression—in education as well as in other areas.

Many Americans may not realize that during the 1920s and '30s in Texas and California, courageous Mexican-American parents put their safety on the line to challenge state laws that segregated students by race in public schools.

On January 5, 1931, for instance, the principal of Lemon Grove Grammar School near San Diego, acting under instructions from the school's trustees and the Chamber of Commerce, stood at the schoolhouse door and admitted everyone except the Latino students, who were instructed to attend school in an old two-room building nearby.

The parents would not let their children go to the other school, because it was run down. They organized and beat the segregationist policies. The children returned to the public school—where they belonged.

This action set the stage for the Mendez case in 1946, the first time a federal court would hold the "separate but equal" standard unconstitutional. That decision, in turn, helped lay the groundwork for the Supreme Court's holding in Brown v. Board of Education nearly a decade later.

We have seen this same powerful force for equality and quality here in Washington. Facing a crisis in meeting the educational needs of Hispanic, immigrant, and other minority youths, members of the community created this school in 1979. With enthusiastic support, it has grown from 40 students and five teachers, to nearly 700 students from 40 different countries.

A TRANSFORMATION OF HISTORIC PROPORTIONS

But there are still challenges, here and across the

nation—not the least of which is an extraordinarily significant demographic trend, the growth of the Hispanic-American population.

In just five years, Hispanics will be the largest U.S. minority. By 2050, nearly one-quarter of our population will be Hispanic. Even more significantly, the greatest growth will come among young people. One in three members of the Latino population is under age 15—a number that only highlights the importance of education in the coming century.

We are already the most diverse nation in the world—and we have never been static in our diversity. But these kinds of demographic changes will involve almost every aspect of our society and require us to think still more creatively about the future.

Communities across the nation, from Boise, Idaho, to Georgetown, Delaware, are being transformed by the changing population. Dealing with this kind of change requires creative thinking and an eagerness to adapt and to incorporate cultural and linguistic differences into the learning process.

There are no simple solutions. It will require a comprehensive focus on education from pre-K to postgraduate levels; from childhood to adulthood; in school, after school, and at home; and all the time with the support of the community.

The good news is that understanding of what is required is growing. A new enthusiasm for getting things done is evident. And a new paradigm for how to achieve this goal is on the horizon—a model focused on the assets of this community, rather than on the deficits.

Today, I will outline a series of challenges for the 21st century that build on this enthusiasm and success.

THE PROMISE OF LANGUAGE

First, I want to address the promise of language. For many, language is at the core of the Latino experience in this country, and it must be at the center of future opportunities for this community and for this nation. Parents and educators want all

children to learn English because it is essential for success. And we also know how valuable two languages can be.

It is high time we begin to treat language skills as the asset they are, particularly in this global economy. Anything that encourages a person to know more than one language is positive-and should be treated as such. Perhaps we should begin to call the learning of a second language what it truly is—"bi-literacy."

Unfortunately, some have viewed those who use a foreign language with suspicion and their language itself as a barrier to success. In some places, even the idea of "bilingual education" is controversial. It shouldn't be.

There are many different and effective strategies for teaching English, from bilingual to sheltered English to ESL. Today, I want to spotlight the dual language approach, which is also sometimes referred to as two-way bilingual or dual immersion education.

Bilingual and ESL programs are working well in many states toward this goal of bi-literacy, and they will continue to work well if we set clear performance measures and provide the resources needed to meet the rising demand with quality teachers.

Good, solid bilingual programs can make a difference in helping students learn English and achieve academically. I am pleased that the budget plan that the president recently submitted to Congress for FY 2001 increases funding for Bilingual Education to $296 million and nearly doubles investment in foreign language education.

I also want to draw your attention to a very important and helpful publication just released by our Office for Civil Rights, entitled *Programs for English Language Learners.* This valuable resource, developed by our Seattle office in response to requests from school districts, offers materials for planning and self-assessment that are consistent with the district's individual needs and circumstances.

But, whatever the approach to teaching English, it cannot be simply a defensive or reactive one. If we see to it that immigrants and their children can speak

only English and nothing more—then we will have missed one of the greatest opportunities of this new century, namely, to take advantage of the invaluable asset that helps define a culture.

Proficiency in English and one other language is something that we need to encourage among all young people. That is why I am delighted to see and highlight the growth and promise of so many dual-language bilingual programs across the country. They are challenging young people with high standards, high expectations, and curriculum in two languages.

They are the wave of the future. In Salem, Oregon, for instance, Grant Elementary School has instituted a high-achieving Spanish-English dual-language program to help both Spanish- and English-speaking students develop language skills in the other language.

Our nation needs to encourage more of these kinds of learning opportunities, in many different languages. That is why I am challenging our nation to increase the number of dual-language schools to at least 1,000 over the next five years, and with strong federal, state and local support we can have many more.

Right now, we have about 260 dual-immersion schools and that is only a start. We need to invest in these kinds of programs and make sure they are in communities that can most benefit from them. In an international economy, knowledge—and knowledge of language—is power.

Our nation can only grow stronger if all our children grow up learning two languages. The early school years are the best and easiest time for children to learn language.

Unfortunately, too many teachers and administrators today treat a child's native language as a weakness if it is not English.

I can assure you that when they enter the workforce in several years we will regret the inability of our children to speak two languages. Our global economy demands it; our children deserve it.

It is time to move beyond the stereotype of a child who is not fluent in English as one who is not intelligent or cannot learn. Occasionally, children are separated from their peers, and even inappropriately identified for special education services simply because English is not their native language. No one is willing or able to make the appropriate evaluation and spend the necessary time to help them learn to speak English well.

Unfortunately, the lack of understanding about language issues can lead to the opposite situation as well—young people who are not diagnosed as needing special education instruction when in fact they do need it.

We must make sure that all children are served appropriately, that the programs that serve these children are held accountable, and that the students in them are held to high standards. Anything less is counterproductive.

I am very pleased that over thirty percent of Title I funds are serving Hispanic students. This administration initiated the Title I testing requirement that is helping to ensure the inclusion of all students in Title I assessments and school district accountability systems.

A DEMAND FOR TEACHERS AND NEW WAYS OF TEACHING

The second challenge we must meet is a demand for teachers and new ways of teaching. Teaching is at the heart of our efforts to transform how we view language and support student learning.

Over the next 10 years we face a demand for more than two million teachers, with acute needs in fields like math and science, special education, and bilingual education. The changing demographics and the advent of new learning technologies and ways of teaching will require a more diverse and more adaptable teaching force.

Let me highlight just one shortcoming in the teaching force: 54 percent of all teachers have limited English proficient (LEP) students in their classrooms, yet only one-fifth of teachers feel very prepared to serve

them. As I called for in my State of American Education speech last month, we need to examine making teaching a year-round and better paid profession. We need teachers who are ready to take on this challenge, and we need to give them more time to prepare for it.

We need teachers who not only know more than one language but also have the background and training to maximize the learning potential of students with diverse backgrounds. We need teachers who, when they see a Latino child—or any minority student—have high expectations and visualize great achievements for that child.

And we need teachers who know how to make a connection with a student and to build on that connection, using creativity when necessary. One fifth-grade teacher in Texas would tell her largely Hispanic class about the importance of graduating from high school and going to college.

A young student to whom she was providing tutoring, commented proudly that her mother was also studying to graduate from high school, by taking the GED. The teacher offered to help, and ended up working with both mother and daughter after school.

Not only did both "students"—mother and daughter—improve academically, but also there were more far-reaching benefits. The daughter saw how important it was to learn *and* how important it was for her mother to learn.

Her mother shared in the joy and pride that comes from learning *and* serving as a strong role model. And the teacher's willingness to reach out to the community and think beyond the classroom paradigm made her a more effective teacher.

This is what I mean when I say we must think in creative ways about how we can best educate all students—and even what we mean when we say the word "student."

The Even Start program, for one, supports local projects that encourage this creativity by blending early childhood education, parenting instruction and adult education.

Many teachers across the country pursue their profession with exactly this kind of dedication and with great results. We need to support them and reward their innovation, commitment, and professionalism—and we must make sure more children experience such teachers.

To help bring the best and most innovative teachers into our classrooms, the administration has sent Congress a $1 billion proposal. The goal of this funding is to raise teaching quality, recruit new teachers, reduce out-of-field teaching, and attract more certified teachers into our poorest schools.

But this federal investment needs to be supported by a change in the way that our schools of education go about their mission and the time and resources they devote to meeting this challenge.

The Latino and Language Minority Teacher Project in California is one example of how these institutions can respond. The collaborative project, which links several universities and the Los Angeles Unified School District, is designed to respond to the increasing shortage of teachers prepared to teach limited English proficient students.

RAISING ACHIEVEMENT-LOWERING THE DROP-OUT RATE

The third challenge I want to address today is raising achievement and lowering the drop-out rate for Hispanic students. While the achievement gap between Hispanic and white children remains high, progress is evident.

Hispanics have made significant gains on NAEP math assessments at all levels and greater gains in science than their white peers. And Hispanic-Americans have more than quadrupled their enrollment in higher education over the last two decades, although they are still vastly underrepresented.

Many schools are doing much of what has to be done to raise achievement levels. Here at Bell Multicultural, for instance, where 98 percent of students are below the poverty line, you have achieved a 95 percent attendance rate and a drop-

out rate of only 10 percent, far below the national average. And 70 percent of the students go to college.

We can turn schools around and return these young people back to the world of learning. Indeed, in many places we already are.

How are Bell and other schools making this kind of progress? Not through any "magic bullet" solution, but through hard work, with well-prepared teachers and strong principals, with challenging and engaging classes, the support of parents and the entire community, and an overarching commitment to ensure that all children learn.

They do it by being schools that offer more than just a 9-to-3 classroom. They are safe centers of the community, providing programs and classes on drop-out prevention, vocational-technical training, career development, parenting skills and adult literacy.

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES EARLY

These strategies can work for all students and their parents—and Latinos must be included. Many of these strategies are described in a report funded by my Department. This report identifies a number of exemplary practices, programs, and individual schools that are helping to transform education for Hispanic youth. I hope that schools, teachers, and administrators across the nation review it.

One observation the report makes is that we can't wait until junior high school to raise achievement levels and lower the drop-out rate. Indeed, a recent groundbreaking study of kindergartners by my Department demonstrated that many of the differences between groups of students in elementary and secondary school already exist when children enter kindergarten.

In other words, the seed for high achievement and dropout prevention is planted long before high school, and we need to start much earlier to make sure that the seed germinates. The better and earlier the start, the stronger the finish.

We can make a significant and immediate impact on

improving the school readiness and subsequent educational achievement of young children through a few sensible actions.

I urge school officials to help make sure that every child who can be covered is covered under CHIP health insurance programs and also to make this year's national Census a success. Our children are a blessing so let's make sure that we count all of our blessings. Millions of dollars in federal and other aid depend on an accurate count.

We also know that enrollment in quality child care, particularly when focused on early literacy makes a powerful difference. Our 1996 study found that only 28 percent of Hispanic 3-year-olds enrolled in early child care programs compared with 45 percent of their white counterparts. The administration's 2001 budget proposal would increase funding for Head Start by one billion dollars, which would help address this. We must do more.

It is so important, particularly in the early years, to have small classes so teachers can provide individual attention to students. We also need to increase the amount of time we read to children and talk to them about what is read. Reading is an integral part of the learning and life experience, particularly for students who come from homes where a language other than English is spoken.

With a strong foundation in reading, schools can put in place another important part of building an engaging learning environment and raising achievement levels—challenging classes.

For instance, a recent study by my Department showed that Latino students were more than three times more likely to go to college if they took two or more Advanced Placement courses than those who took none.

One reason for the success of Bell and other schools like it, is that they have a broad curriculum that includes challenging classes, including a wide variety of Advanced Placement classes.

I would like to recognize a few of Bell's AP students who are here today, and who I believe have already been awarded full scholarships to attend Bowdoin

College in Maine next year.

Still another way to turn around schools, ensure safe and disciplined learning environments, and raise achievement levels is through the creation of smaller schools that build supportive learning environments and give students a sense of connection to each other, to teachers, and to learning.

In Grand Prairie, Texas, the South Grand Prairie High School has a student body of nearly 2,500. That's a lot of students for one building. Four years ago, Grand Prairie became a New American High School and undertook an extensive reform program to raise academic expectations and achievement. The school created five academies, in which students and teachers work in an academic area that best suits them and in which more individual attention is provided.

The changes made a real difference. The pass rate for the Texas state exam at Grand Prairie has risen nearly 20 percent in three years. And the pass rate for reading is at 91 percent, compared with the state average of 67 percent. The dropout rate is under 2 percent and nearly two-thirds of the students enroll in college.

One way to increase the college going rate is for higher education institutions to join forces with the K-12 system to create a pathway for student achievement. They must be ready to adjust to the growth in the number of Hispanic students and to meet their needs, and they must develop new and creative ways to enlarge the pool of eligible minority applicants to colleges and universities. As the President's Commission said last week, colleges and universities need to think creatively and to adopt a K-16 approach. TRIO and GEAR-UP support this goal.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY

The fourth challenge concerns the importance of community. The best schools are those that operate as centers of the community for both children and adults. They are schools that are supported by community centers, and after-school programs that enhance educational opportunities.

The heart of the Latino community is the family. Parents must be supported in guiding their children to take challenging courses and in providing them the support to stay in school and go on to college.

In addition, increasing the literacy of Hispanic parents and guaranteeing high-quality educational assistance to these parents are critical to raising the achievement levels of Hispanic children. That is why we strongly support family literacy and learning centers and after-school programs.

A few months ago I had the opportunity to visit one such enriching center right down the street from here—the Latin American Youth Center. I had a wonderful discussion with some of the students and counselors there. The pictures you see here around you are of young people who attend that center.

In addition to housing a creative public charter school, the center offers a wealth of support services to young people in the community, including some who have left school and want to return to the world of learning. We need more places like it.

The U.S. Department of Education supports community involvement in education with a wealth of helpful publications in Spanish and English for parents and their children, including *Building Your Baby's Brain*, *Questions Parents Ask About School*, and *Getting Ready for College Early* (links to these publications are below). They are all listed in a comprehensive catalogue that is available free through our toll-free number, 1-800-USA-LEARN.

We also operate a bilingual call center for Spanish-speaking parents through this phone number, and our Web site, www.ed.gov, now has a Spanish-language option. In addition, we provide grants to support captioning in Spanish for a number of news and public information television shows.

Today, I am very pleased to announce the release of a new resource—a videotape and accompanying materials that will support Spanish-speaking families and the schools and organizations that serve them.

Entitled *Vamos Juntos a la Escuela (Let's Go to School Together)*, the video looks at four areas—

parent involvement, readiness to learn, reading and mathematics, and preparing young children for college. It is intended as a tool for presentations to groups of Spanish-speaking families and could be provided by schools, colleges, community and faith-based organizations, and others.

Procter and Gamble has made a significant financial commitment to ensure that this video will be widely distributed. This is the first part of their new *Avanzando* campaign to invest in the Hispanic community.

I applaud their efforts and I encourage others to follow their lead. My Department is committed to building partnerships with corporations like Proctor and Gamble.

We have also worked with Univision on a broad-based television campaign entitled "Education Matters." I was with my friend Henry Cisneros last summer in Los Angeles to launch this campaign. Just this week, following a half-hour broadcast about college financial aid, my office received more than a thousand requests for information. The Mott Foundation has also made an extraordinary investment in after-school programs for Latinos.

CONSTRUCTING A NEW FUTURE

My fifth challenge today concerns the importance of having modern schools. No amount of hard work, challenging curricula, and academic restructuring can completely overcome the burden of a severely aging or overcrowded school, as so many of our nation's schools are today. That is why President Clinton and Vice President Gore have been urging Congress for several years to pass school modernization legislation.

Passage of school modernization legislation would help schools like Bell meet the growing challenges of the new century. Looking at everything that Maria Tukeva and the staff and students here have been able to achieve—with all of the physical challenges—it makes you appreciate how much more they could have accomplished if the school had everything that a school should have.

Of course, Bell is not waiting around. I am very

impressed by their plan to create a new educational campus with Lincoln Middle School. Among its many features, the plan includes a strong focus on the use of technology.

To be fully engaged in learning in the 21st century, all students need access to the most modern learning tools—the computer and the Internet—and every teacher needs to be well trained to use and teach them effectively.

Technology is not a substitute for solid teaching and learning-for the basics like reading and writing, science and math. But it does offer a way to enhance traditional learning; to open the doors to the best libraries and museums, particularly for students in disadvantaged schools, and to raise achievement levels.

The Hartford Public School system has been the poorest- performing district in Connecticut for the last 10 years. More than half of the majority Hispanic student body drop out after the ninth grade.

In 1999, the new superintendent began a number of reforms, including a massive effort to get technology into the classrooms and, with a lap-top program, into children's homes.

The program is already transforming the individual lives of students and their families—and strengthening the schools. Achievement scores are up, and the district's improvement in math and reading last year was more than the previous four years combined.

These are gains worth studying and emulating. A school can't use technology to improve if all of its students don't have access to the resources.

A secondary impact of technology in education is on the parents of students, an issue of particular importance to Latinos. Crossroads Café in New York, for instance, has used distance learning to help adults improve their reading and English language skills to advance at work. The students themselves played a major role in helping their parents learn English.

Providing these kinds of opportunities is why the

administration has called for a threefold increase—to $100 million—in funding for Community Technology Centers. This funding will make educational technology available to residents of low-income urban and rural communities.

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

The Hispanic community, like all communities, wants its children to achieve to high standards and its schools to be held accountable for that achievement. We are making progress. But we need to increase the pace of that progress. Parents want to be part of the system. But they need support.

In looking toward the future, we must think comprehensively—no single solution will work. I have outlined five challenges to provide this support because it is something that affects the well-being of all citizens, not just Hispanic Americans: the promise of language and learning two languages; new ways of teaching (including quality teachers, small classes, and small schools); lowering the dropout rate through early intervention-remember, the better the start, the stronger the finish; the importance of community and family; and constructing a future with modern buildings and technology in every classroom.

In closing, I would like to mention a recent comment by a Latino educator who noted that "young children learn from the very beginning that they have the power to influence their world." I suspect it is education that gives them this power.

With this in mind, the first lady initiated a national conversation on Hispanic Children and Youth. This year, the administration committed more than $8 billion to programs that support the Hispanic Education Action Plan ($800 million in new dollars), and soon the president will host a White House meeting to further discuss these issues and commit the nation to action.

It is time for us to empower Hispanic youth by giving them educational opportunities, teaching them to succeed, and holding schools and communities accountable for their success.

We must forge solutions and create opportunities for

Hispanic Americans for the new century, just as we have done for so many other groups pursuing the American Dream throughout our history.

When we achieve this, when we transcend stereotypes and overcome the tyranny of low expectations, then we will be able to guarantee everyone the key civil right for the 21st century—a quality education.

Links to Publications

- *Building Your Baby's Brain*
- *Cómo estimular el cerebro infantil*
- *Questions Parents Ask About School*
- *Las Preguntas Que Hacen Los Padres Sobre La Escuela*
- *Getting Ready for College Early*
- *Preparándose a Tiempo Para la Universidad*

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